Brazil May Purge Political Foes

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From News Dispatches

RIO DE JANEIRO, Dec. 17 — Barzil's military-dominated government indicated today that it was ready to strip hundreds of opponents of their political rights.

In his first speech since he suspended Congress last Friday, President Arthur da Costa e Silva told the graduating class of the army staff school last night that the housecleaning undertaken following the 1964 revolution "unfortunately" had not been completed.

Hundereds lost their political rights after the army overthrew President Joao Goulart in 1964. The leftist were the chief targets then; now it appears that critics of the military and the status quo in Brazil are the marked men.

Government spokesman Fernando Galvao told foreign correspondents here today that the da Costa el Silva regime was studying an enabling act under which the President could suspend the political rights of opponents of the regime for ten years and break the mandates of federal and state deputies and members of municipal assemblies. He said no list had yet been drawn up.

The current political crisis was precipitated by the refusal of Congress to lift the parliamentary immunity of a deputy who had criticized the military. Prodded by military leaders, da Costa el Silva suspended Congress and assumed dictatorial powers.

200 Arrested

Spokesman Galvao said that about 200 persons had been arrested since then. He said most were being held in army barracks. The statement was the first official word on the number of persons detained.

Galvao also said former President Juscelino Kubitschek and former Gov. Carlos Lacerda, both arrested Friday, were now being held under house arrest only.

In his speech, which was broadcast over radio and television, da Costa e Silva said counterrevolutionaries had been trying "to reconquer the illegitimate positions they enjoyed." To support this, he cited alleged attacks on the military "from the rostrum, classroom and press."

The President omitted a reference to attacks from the "pulpit" which was contained in the advance text of his speech.

The Roman Catholic Church is already under fire from some army leaders because of the activities of such liberal clerics as Dom Helder Camara, the Archbishop of Olina and Recife.

Politicians Accused

Da Costa e Silva accused the members of congress from the government's Renewal Alliance Party, known as ARENA, of being more interested in prestige than in "that which was right and reasonable." The government majority failed to hold together in the vote to lift the immunity of Deputy Marcio Moreira Alves. Reports have been circulating that conservative members of ARENA are planning a new Party.

[In Washington, the State Department declined to comment on the status of the U.S. aid program to Brazil in view of the recent developments in the country. Brazil received $355 million in aid in 1967. Department spokesman Robert J. McCloskey said, however, that the situation in Brazil appeared to have calmed during Monday and early Tuesday.]